

within Dartford or on its periphery, although the prolific colony of *P. argus* on the London Clay several miles to the east at Swanscombe Park flourished amidst an abundance of this plant. *A. agestis* was ubiquitous, generally to be observed singly or in small numbers, but sometimes in a limited area a vast number might be congregated. Thus, Chalmers-Hunt, 1961 (*Butterflies and Moths of Kent, Ent. Rec. 73*, Supplement p.107), records that scores could be seen in a field adjacent to Joydens Wood in 1946, and at Longfield in 1933 I found the butterfly in profusion in a recently disturbed field awaiting development.

On 1 August 1999, a very fresh male *A. agestis* attended the main flower border in my garden. It was fresh in appearance and gave ample opportunity to verify that it was not merely a well-marked female *P. icarus*. Its immediate origin was doubtless the abandoned paddock, grassy meadows or disused land adjacent to the end of my garden, whence come the occasional *P. icarus*.

In recent years, two atlases of the local distribution of butterflies to include this area have been published. Philp, 1993 (*The Butterflies of Kent, an atlas of their distribution*) shows *A. agestis* not recorded for the 10-kilometre square which includes Dartford, nor the one immediately to the east, stretching beyond Gravesend, with the exception of the tetrad embracing Swanscombe Park and the adjoining large chalk quarry. The period covered was 1981 to 1990. Plant, 1987 (*The Butterflies of the London Area*) covering a slightly shorter period in the 1980s, also has no records for these two 10km squares; both show the species present on the Chalk further south.— B.K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: It is most interesting to note the reappearance of *Aricia agestis* at a large number of localities in the south-east during the last few years – not only at traditional sites from where it had apparently disappeared, but also at relatively new sites which clearly did not have the butterfly years ago as they did not then exist. Particularly affected seems to be the East Thames Corridor – essentially the Thames-side areas of Kent and Essex – where the past dumping of pulverised fuel ash (PFA) has created a base-rich substrate and where the unique micro-climate favours a nationally important assemblage of aculeate Hymenoptera and other thermophilic insects. However, records extend westwards right through the heart of London to ruderal sites in the City and beyond. I have been gathering records of *A. agestis* from this area over the past couple of years and would be very keen to hear from anyone who can supply further information, to include both location and first date of appearance plus, if possible, a note of whether the species was previously recorded and, if so, the date of the last known record.

COLIN W. PLANT

Unusual food plant for *Epiphyas postvittana* (Walker) (Lep.: Tortricidae)

In late September 1999 I was brought two larvae spinning the leaves of a cannabis plant *Cannabis sativa* L. growing in Lymington, Hampshire. The owner of the plant was in high dudgeon at the insects' temerity. The plant was aptly growing in a pot,

but as part of the regime of lavish care in which it basked it had been taken outside during hot days when no doubt eggs were deposited on it.

One of the larvae transformed itself to a specimen of *Epiphyas postvittana* in mid-October. It may be thought that the larva had suffered no ill effects from its noxious foodplant, but it may be observed that the progression from soft to hard drugs was demonstrated in that it died sniffing ammonia.— TONY PICKLES, 2a Park Avenue, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9GX.

Another unusual foodplant record

Tony Pickles' observation, above, of *Epiphyas postvittana* (Walker) larvae found on hemp *Cannabis sativa* prompts me to recall that during my student years I too found a plant that was being used by Lepidoptera larvae. In this case it was another tortricid, *Cacoecimorpha pronubana* (Hb.). For reasons which readers may speculate upon freely, my memory of the event is somewhat hazy, but I do recall finding at least three or four larvae on the young tips of a plant that was evidently grown indoors from seed and which attained a height of over three metres by the end of that summer!

There does not seem to be any published reference to *Cannabis sativa* as a foodplant of British Lepidoptera until now and I wonder if there are further records that might now be usefully listed in these pages. Unlike Tony, however, I can not support the notion of the progression from this to harder drugs, since my moths attained a ripe old age without succumbing to any other temptation.— COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP.

Some moths new to Monmouthshire

During June 1999, Kevin Dupe, Project Officer for *Community Action for Wildlife in Newport (CAWN)*, sent me a number of moth specimens for identification. Amongst these were two tortricids of particular interest since they are not listed in G. A. Neil Horton's book *Monmouthshire Lepidoptera – the butterflies and moths of Gwent* (1994. Comma International Biological Systems) and appear to be new records for Vice-county 50. These were *Hysterosia inopiana* (Haw.) and the highly distinctive *Cacoecimorpha pronubana* (Hb.).

Kevin netted a single example of *C. pronubana* during the day on 5 June 1999 on the west bank of the River Usk, just to the north of Newport's most notable landmark, the Transporter Bridge, within one kilometre of the city centre. According to Bradley *et al* (1973. *British Tortricoid Moths* 112-113), the species was first recorded as British in Sussex in 1905 and subsequently spread westwards to colonise most of southern England. Since it was noted in Glamorgan as long ago as 1940 it was surely only a matter of time before it was reported from the more easterly county of Monmouthshire.

Several individuals of *Hysterosia inopiana* were captured on the east bank of the River Usk on 23 June 1999 about two kilometres north of Uskmouth. Again, this species is found in Glamorgan and, according to Bradley *et al*, also in Cardiganshire.